

# Speech: The UK post-Brexit: a stronger and even closer ally to Latvia

There is a well known saying in Latvia, 'Veca mīlestība nerūs' – old love does not rust.

And it is with a very similar sentiment that the UK is approaching the upcoming negotiations with the European Union. We are seeking a new, strong partnership with our closest neighbours in Europe.

For the UK and Latvia, we hope that that our new partnership will be deeper than just our individual relationships with the European Union. Our histories do, of course, pre-date the establishment of the EU.

Our shared history can be seen in your capital city – transformed by its former mayor and British emigrant, George Armistead.

It can also be seen at Oxford University where the legacy of the great Riga-born philosopher and historian, Sir Isaiah Berlin, lives on.

I'm proud too of the fact that the United Kingdom was the first country to de facto recognise Latvia's independence almost a century ago – a week before Latvian independence was declared. And deeply honoured that you annually commemorate our Royal Navy's important contribution to defending your independence in 1919, when the British cruiser HMS Dragon helped the Latvian Army to protect Riga from West Russian Volunteer Army.

We are natural allies for a number of reasons.

We are both strong supporters of global free trade and have a trusted relationship when it comes to questions of security and defence.

So the message I bring with me to Latvia today is a simple one – the UK and Latvia will continue to be reliable partners, willing allies and close friends.

I know there are many here who were disappointed with the outcome of the UK's referendum vote, which I understand.

But today I'm meeting with your Prime Minister and your Foreign Minister to make clear that we can use the UK's departure from the EU to deepen and reinvigorate our partnership.

For while we may be leaving the institutions of the EU, we are not leaving Europe.

What we are seeking is a smooth and orderly exit from the EU and a strong new partnership.

And I'm confident that if we approach negotiations in a spirit of goodwill,

we can deliver a positive outcome that works for the mutual benefit of all.

Because it is absolutely in the UK's interests that the EU succeeds and prospers politically, economically and socially.

For our bilateral relationship, there are three areas where our mutual interests converge.

Firstly, Latvians living in the UK contribute a great deal to the fabric of our society and we'll continue to welcome the brightest and the best to the UK.

I want to emphasise that Latvians' existing rights to reside in the UK are not affected by the EU referendum vote, so there is no reason for any Latvian national who is legally living in the UK and obeying the laws of the country to feel insecure.

And the British government has been clear – we want to get a deal done quickly that protects the rights of all EU citizens living in the UK, and British citizens living in the EU.

Indeed, we would have liked to have come to such an agreement already, and have been clear it will be a priority once formal negotiations begin.

Secondly, maintaining security and defence in Europe will continue to be uppermost in our minds. So we'll stand by our NATO commitments to spend 2% of GDP on defence and help protect the interests of our allies and friends.

Finally, trade between our countries is significant, totalling well over a billion pounds last year and covering a range of sectors, including timber, machinery and financial services.

And we are trading more, not less, with trade between the UK and Latvia growing by around a fifth last year.

So we will continue to buy Latvian goods and services, sell you ours and trade with you as freely as possible. That is exactly why we are pursuing a new free trade agreement that will be to our mutual benefit.

Britain's decision to leave the European Union wasn't about us closing ourselves off from the world. Instead it was about us opening ourselves up to the rest of the world.

We'll remain an outward-looking country that aims to be an even closer ally to Latvia.

Because just as our histories have been closely intertwined, so will we both positively shape the direction our countries take in future.

Latvia and the UK will remain close partners. My message to you is that our important relationship will not diminish after our exit. Indeed, it will grow stronger still.

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## [The Forest School](#)

I was sad to receive a copy of the resignation letter of the Head teacher of the Forest this week. I wish her well in retirement and understand her wish to pass the leadership of the school on to someone else.

In the letter she draws attention to the current level of the Forest budget. I agree with those in Wokingham who would like our schools to have bigger budgets, as they are at the bottom of the league tables for receiving public money. I campaigned on the Conservative party Manifesto in 2015 that proposed a move to fairer funding in this Parliament. I worked with MPs from other parts of the country in the previous Parliament who shared the problem of relatively low levels of financial support for their schools. This Parliament I have urged successive Secretaries of State to press on with putting in a suitable scheme that rebalances the cash going to each school so that those getting least are better treated.

The present Secretary of State has promised to introduce such a scheme and is consulting on the details. I have urged her to give more to the poorly financed schools. I have also asked for further transitional relief. Some was awarded in recent years as the Coalition government agreed with me and the MP Group making the case for fairer funding.

I did have a meeting at the Forest to discuss budgets and to suggest ways to attract more money. The immediate pressures have been created by a shortfall of pupils applying to the school, which the Forest attributed to the opening of Bohunt. The main sums of money are given to schools on a per capita basis to cover the costs of each pupil. This will remain true under the new funding scheme, so it will be important for a school that wants a decent budget to recruit pupils up to its capacity. With more pupils and more income it is possible to offer a wider range of subjects and to have more equipment and staff. If fewer pupils attend then it does mean fewer staff and may also entail a narrower range of subjects.

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## [News story: David Davis visits Baltic leaders to discuss future relations](#)

A global Britain is determined to maintain its historic relations with Europe after leaving the European Union, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, said during meetings this week with Baltic leaders.

During the two day visit, from 20-21 February 2017, the Secretary of State met heads of government and other leading representatives from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia to discuss joint opportunities and priorities ahead of the exit negotiations.

The Secretary of State underlined in all three countries the government's desire to see the European Union succeed politically and economically after the UK's exit.

He also made clear its determination to secure the rights, both of UK citizens currently living in Baltic countries, and their citizens living in the UK as quickly as possible.

He also emphasised the UK's ongoing commitment to its bilateral relationship with the Baltic states and towards mutual interests such as trade, justice, defence and security.

The Secretary of State confirmed that Britain will continue to play a leading role in European security and that the government wants Britain's future relationship with the European Union to include practical arrangements on matters of law enforcement, the sharing of intelligence material with the country's European Union allies and defence cooperation.

The UK currently has the second biggest defence budget in NATO at £178 billion and is one of five countries, including Estonia, meeting the NATO 2% spending target. It is providing one of four battalions to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland, with 800 troops being sent to Estonia this year.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, said:

The UK is leaving the European Union, not Europe. We are looking to maintain our close ties with the Baltic states and all our European allies, and will continue to commit to mutual interests such as trade, justice, defence and security.

The UK has led European action on keeping our continent safe – whether implementing sanctions against Russia following its aggressive action in Ukraine or securing Europe's external border. Such partnership continues to be of vital importance, particularly in the face of growing concern about the threat to security across the continent.

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# Speech: Funding for smart parking and traffic management schemes

Good morning everyone.

I'd like to start by thanking Councillor David Harvey for the introduction and opportunity for me to speak today.

I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to see for myself, the potential benefit for motorists – and to the wider economy – of this excellent smart parking project, which has attracted £200,000 government grant funding, and which the Department for Transport is taking forward in partnership with Westminster City Council and other key stakeholders.

This work further demonstrates this government's commitment to working alongside industry to promote technology and innovation, and to maintain the UK's position at the forefront of the digital revolution.

And on that, I am also pleased to announce today that we are funding [19 smart traffic management schemes](#) including smart parking demonstrator schemes in Coventry, Luton, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire – as well as a partnership project between Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Westminster, which looks to improve electric vehicle parking by combining parking sensors with electric vehicle charging points to give drivers real-time information on available spaces where they can recharge.

The way we travel continues to change, and technology has a valuable role to play through co-operative intelligent transport systems.

By enabling communication between vehicles, traffic signals, roadside sensors – as well as with other vehicles – the resulting information can bring increasing benefits, both to road operators, in terms of improved network management, and to road users, through the information they need, in real-time, to make the most of their journey.

Cities face a common challenge of accommodating significant rising demand for transport over the next 20 years, boosted by continued population growth, while meeting challenging carbon reduction targets and delivering customer expectations of transport that is safer, cleaner and greener, less congested and more reliable.

Technology and information have huge potential to generate innovative solutions in these urban areas, and deliver more joined up and seamless multi-modal solutions which make better use of customer time.

Effective use of technology is crucial to delivering this, but this is not an end in itself – and it needs to be used to address specific policy challenges. This project is an excellent example of just that.

While there is no definitive evidence on the percentage, at any one time, of

traffic circling while looking for a parking space, the knock on effects on congestion and emissions are obvious, not to mention the added stress this can cause. We've all been there.

Improving the parking experience can help to improve public acceptance of, and compliance with, parking restrictions that are so necessary to keep traffic flowing.

Having real-time mapping to direct us to an available parking space within a mobile app, that allows 'one-click' electronic payment, that activates when we arrive, and stops when we leave, could not have been imagined not so long ago.

And I am pleased to have seen the project go further by extending this case to taxi drivers, who face the similar problem of finding available taxi ranks. It follows that a smarter distribution of available taxis can only benefit pedestrians looking for a taxi.

Although 'big data' is the lifeblood of digital traffic management solutions, data gathering is, in itself, of little use. What matters is how this data is interpreted and used to gain a better understanding of travel patterns and behaviours.

I am therefore delighted to be able to present a prize this morning to the winners of Westminster's Parking Hackathon which took place last week. This event has already yielded valuable lessons to enable a better understanding of parking use which will further inform policy on parking.

With the high level of parking demand on their road network, I commend Westminster City Council for rising to the challenge and placing itself at the forefront of parking technology in the UK.

I wish you a successful session this afternoon, sharing this good work with local authorities from around the country, and I wish you continued success with this project.

I've seen today that technology really does have the potential to 'make parking better'.

Thank you.

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**It is crucial that the Government urgently improve departmental**

# monitoring and evaluation measures – Jon Trickett

**Jon**

**Trickett MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office**, responding to a Regulatory Policy Committee report criticising the quality of departments' impact assessments of policy decisions, said:

"Years of Tory cuts are clearly taking their toll on civil servants who face increased workloads, tight resources and worsening conditions.

"It is utterly unacceptable that departments are diverting resources away from providing rigorous impact assessment of their decisions – what some might call 'idiot-proofing' the civil service from Tory policy.

"Ministers could be leading us up the garden path and the departments themselves would be none the wiser.

"It is crucial that the Government urgently improve departmental monitoring and evaluation measures."